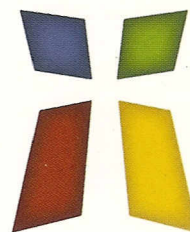


QUARTERLY JOURNAL



UNIVERSITY UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH

WWW.UUMC.ORG 2409 GUADALUPE STREET, AUSTIN, TX 78705 512-478-9387 WWW.UUMC.ORG

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES FAITH MAKE?

Dear Friends,

The Season of Lent is a great time to ask ourselves, "What difference does my faith make in my life?" Many Christians focus on the "personal benefits" – assurance, inspiration, comfort,



Rev. Carl W. Rohlf

guidance and a good conscience. While these are certainly significant, they miss

the "social benefits" of being a Christian.

While being blessed is often the beginning of faith, *being a blessing* is the distinct, but inseparable other side of faith. I believe it is God's dream for all God's children – believers and unbelievers alike – to make an offering of their blessings for the benefit of others. The difference for us believers is that we are the ones who have actually made the promise to do so!

I do not believe Jesus was expressing personal benefits when he "set his eyes toward Jerusalem." Facing betrayal, denial, scourging, ridicule, crucifixion and death are not aspects of personal benefits. Rather, all that Jesus faced in those five days leading to Good Friday was offered purely for the benefit of others.

There are some passive means by which my discipleship blesses others. For instance, because I am a moral person, I treat others morally. That is a blessing for them, but it is more a side benefit of my personal benefits. When it comes to using my blessings to bless others, I believe it means I will find the courage to do things I could otherwise avoid. Personal comfort is no longer a priority. Jesus taught that it is a prerequisite to "deny one's self" in order to actively participate in blessing others.

We can all imagine sacrificing for a dear loved one. It is easy for us to love someone who loves us; Jesus pointed out that even the tax-collectors do that! As acknowledged children of God, we pledge to love God and our neighbor as ourselves. Yet, we are reluctant to even inconvenience ourselves for a stranger, much less sacrifice to love them.

Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations – the book by Bishop Robert Schnase, formerly of our Annual Conference – describes five virtues and how they relate to denying oneself.

"Radical Hospitality" is more than being warm to those who are already warm to us; and is more than simply being courteous to the stranger in our midst.

(Continued on page 3)

UPCOMING SERVICES

Ash Wednesday • February 25
Service of Ashes
Sanctuary, 6:30 p.m.

Daylight Savings Time Begins •
March 8, Spring forward

Durufle Requiem • March 1
Featuring the UUMC choir, orchestra, soloists Patricia Combs, mezzo, and Bruce Cain, baritone.
Sanctuary, 8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

Palm Sunday • April 5
Procession of Palms • Passion Sunday
Sanctuary, 8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

Maundy Thursday • April 9
A Service of Holy Communion
Remembering Christ's Institution of the Lord's Supper
Sanctuary, 7:30 p.m.

Good Friday • April 10
The Reading of the Passion
Tenebrae — a Service of Darkness—
& Strepitus
Sanctuary, 7:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday • April 12 • Sanctuary,
8:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m.,
Chapel, 11:00 a.m.

BOOK REVIEW: JOURNEYS OF HEARTACHE AND GRACE

"Let the little ones come to me, and do not keep them away: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 19:14

By Dr. Melody Chatelle

From 2003 to 2004, I had the privilege of listening to a very special group of children and young people to collect data for my dissertation from The University of Texas at Austin, College of Communication. Ultimately that data became *Journeys of Heartache and Grace: Conversations and Life Lessons from Young People with Serious Illnesses*, published recently by Austin-based LangMarc Publishing (www.langmarc.com).



The stories these young people shared with me are just like the young people themselves: amazing. Take *The Hooters Guy*, a 16-year-old boy living with ataxia-telangiectasia (A-T), a progressive degenerative disease that over time destroys bodily functions. Richard¹ had two goals in mind when I met him: to graduate from high school; and to go to the restaurant called Hooters, a restaurant known for its scantily-clad waitresses. Unfortunately Richard died before officially graduating, but he definitely made it to Hooters. Can you imagine the scene at the restaurant when Richard entered in his wheelchair, along with his mother, his hospice nurse, friends, and the hospice chaplain?

A lesson from the Tree of Life

There's also David, who had spinal muscular atrophy (SMA). Despite being confined to a wheelchair and facing many physical challenges, David spent much of his time helping others less fortunate, actively serving as a member of his church and giving back to the community at large.

David's legacy included making plans for his own funeral service. During his last visit to the hospital he knew so well, David asked to be taken by his mother to the Tree of Life, a bronze piece of art in the shape of a tree with branches commemorating children who had died at the hospital. David wanted to pick out his own branch for when he died. Then, as a part of his funeral,

1 Some pseudonyms like the name Richard are used in this article, as in the book.

David had arranged to have a tape-recorded message played that said: "Bye, everybody. I shall miss you all." This from a 13-year-old boy.

Lessons from *Journeys of Heartache and Grace* apply to anyone who is seriously ill and/or dealing with a loved one with a chronic or terminal illness. They include:

Show up: No matter how difficult the situation is, do not distance yourself from it because you don't know what to say or you think you will make the situation worse. Most likely your presence can help both the young person and the family of the loved one who is seriously ill.

Silence is OK

Listen: When you visit a seriously or terminally ill person, know that silence is ok. There's no need to talk all the time or make small talk just to fill in the space and avoid feeling uncomfortable. As the saying goes, *silence is golden*.

Mirror the talk: Most of the young people said to me, "Why do people want to avoid the word 'death' so much?" Others said they preferred not to talk a lot about dying even though the situation was at hand. There is no cookie-cutter way of talking about end-of-life. Everyone is unique, so just listen to the words, phrases and attitudes being conveyed by the person who is ill or his or her family, and follow their lead.

Stop making sense

Avoid the desire to make sense of it: One of the most offensive comments the youngsters heard from well-meaning people was, "Don't worry, everything will be alright." Or, "Don't worry - this is God's will." A better way of communicating with an ill person is simply to be sensitive rather than trying to make sense of what is happening. "I am so sorry you are going through this," can be a helpful statement. "Is there anything I can help you with right now?" is a good question.

Continued on page 6

HONORED & REMEMBERED

In Memory of Gilbert Robertson

Danny & Mary Johnson
 Jim & Marilyn Forrester
 Julia Sheerin
 Feraldine Johnson
 Melanie & Ingemann Strigel
 Joseph & Gretta Kaufman

In Memory of Willie Kocurek

Russell Gregory
 Lynn & Lillian Anderson
 Joe & Nancy Young
 Mary Curtis
 Margaret Berry

In Memory of Rev. Mrs. B.E. Breihan & Dr. Robert C. Cotner

Beth Cotner

In Honor of Robert C. Cotner Jr.

Cathy & Hugh McCulley, Marti McCulley, Ann & Chris Wright
 Beth Cotner

In Memory of Mary Sue Bethea

Julian & Lois Martin

In Memory of Bess Harris Jones

Julian & Lois Martin

In Memory of Armand Lanier

Julian & Lois Martin

In Memory of William David Craig

Julian & Lois Martin

In Memory of Mary Katherine Hitt

Julian & Lois Martin

In Memory of Bob Brady

Julian & Lois Martin

In Memory of Ramona Bloomquist

Vonda Bloomquist

BOOK REVIEW

Continued from page 5

Anticipate. For young people like David, dying way too soon is just not the way it is supposed to be. Yet everyone dies and every family experiences a member becoming seriously ill at some point. Give thought to this time in your life and how you want it to be. Talk with others in your immediate circle about your desires. Write out notes and pass them along. Take a cue from David: plan and talk with others about this unique time, as challenging as the situation may be.

Author Joan Didion is right in that life as we know it can change in a flash. Perhaps we can, and should, take some lessons about life and recovery and moving ahead from young people who are facing their endings with grit, determination, acceptance and wonderment.

Melody Chatelle holds a Ph.D. in Communication Studies from The University of Texas at Austin. A long-time hospice volunteer, she owns and operates Chatelle and Associates, a nationally-known communication and advocacy consulting firm in Austin, Texas, and is a proud member of University United Methodist Church.

Dr. Chatelle offers presentations and workshops on end-of-life communication. For more information or to schedule a workshop, contact Dr. Chatelle at mchatell@onr.com.

UUMC MEMBERS CAN DONATE ONLINE AT UUMC.ORG

If you prefer the convenience of making donations online, visit www.uumc.org and look for the donations button in the bottom left corner of the home page. You will find a simple process to set up a series of regular automatic contributions or make a special one-time donation to the Capital Campaign, Memorial Fund or the church operating budget. You can print out a detailed confirmation form for recordkeeping purposes.

Making regular contributions online eliminates the need for you to frequently write out checks or prepare envelopes. For the church, online giving produces a more consistent level of donations throughout the year, which makes budget planning easier.